United Nations A/69/787

General Assembly

Distr.: General
23 February 2015

Original: English

Sixty-ninth session
Agenda item 132
Programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015

Standards of accommodation for air travel

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

I. Introduction

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on standards of accommodation for air travel (A/69/643 and Corr.1). The report of the Secretary-General was submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 42/214, 45/248 A, 53/214, 63/268, 65/268 and 67/254 A and decisions 44/442 and 46/450, as well as decision 57/589, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit his report to it on a biennial basis. During its consideration of the report, the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General who provided additional information and clarification, concluding with written responses received on 20 February 2015.

2. The Advisory Committee also had before it, for information, the report of the Board of Auditors on United Nations peacekeeping operations for the 12-month period ended 30 June 2014 (A/69/5 (Vol. II)), which contains information on the audit of official travel for peacekeeping operations conducted by the Board in response to a request of the Advisory Committee.

3. The report of the Secretary-General (A/69/643 and Corr.1) provides information on first-class travel and exceptions to the standards of accommodation for air travel authorized by the Secretary-General, including an indication of the reasons for the exceptions and the resulting additional costs. It covers the two-year period ended 30 June 2014 and provides comparative statistics for the two-year period ended 30 June 2012, as well as trend analyses for the past 10 years.

II. Background

4. The Advisory Committee recalls that the General Assembly, in its resolution 65/268, requested the Secretary-General to improve, as a matter of urgency, the

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management of air travel in the United Nations, including through the implementation of the measures set out in the annex to the resolution, and to pursue a more effective and efficient utilization of resources for air travel. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at the first part of its resumed sixty-sixth session on the implementation of the resolution and on practical steps taken to enhance the effective and efficient utilization of resources for air travel in the United Nations. In response to that request the Secretary-General submitted a report on proposals for a more effective and efficient utilization of resources for air travel (A/66/676), which contained his recommendations for steps to enhance that utilization in the United Nations. In its related report (A/66/739), the Advisory Committee indicated that it did not object to most of the proposals of the Secretary-General and made numerous comments and observations on them.

5. In its resolution 67/254 A, the General Assembly took note of the reports of the Secretary-General (A/66/676 and A/67/356) and endorsed the conclusions and recommendations contained in the reports of the Advisory Committee (A/66/739 and A/67/636), subject to the provisions of the resolution. In the same resolution, the Assembly decided that, for official travellers below the level of Assistant Secretary-General, the standard of accommodation for air travel would be business class if a single-leg journey was 9 hours or more and business class for a multi-leg journey if the combined travel time of the journey was 11 hours or more, including a maximum of 2 hours of connection time, provided that the journey to the next destination resumed within 12 hours. The Assembly also decided that the existing standards of accommodation for air travel and daily subsistence allowance of members of organs and/or subsidiary organs, committees, councils and commissions of the United Nations would remain unchanged.

6. The Secretary-General indicates in his report (A/69/643 and Corr.1) that he has promulgated administrative instruction ST/AI/2013/3 for the purpose of implementing the various staff rules relating to the standards of accommodation for air travel and the exceptions thereto.

III. Observations and recommendations

A. Exceptions authorized by the Secretary-General

7. In its resolution 67/254 A, the General Assembly noted the increasing frequency and costs of exceptions to the standards of accommodation for air travel during the two-year period ended 30 June 2012 (see A/67/356) and requested the Secretary-General to take action to limit the use of exceptions, to conduct an analysis of the trends in the use of exceptions and to present proposals for enhancing controls in that area no later than the sixty-ninth session of the Assembly.

8. In his report (A/69/643 and Corr.1), the Secretary-General provides information on the authority granted to him by the General Assembly for exercising his discretion in making exceptions to the standards of accommodation for air travel on a case-by-case basis when, in his opinion, there were special circumstances that warranted it, such as for: (a) a medical condition; (b) the travel of eminent persons; (c) the travel of prominent persons; (d) arduous journeys; (e) travel undertaken to provide close protection security services; or (f) when the regular standard of accommodation was not available.

9. In his report, the Secretary-General also provides information on the aggregated exceptions approved by the Secretary-General for the United Nations and affiliated entities (ibid., tables 1 and 2) and separately for the United Nations Secretariat (ibid., tables 3 and 4). Analysis of the data in the tables shows that the overall number of exceptions authorized by the Secretary-General for first- and business-class travel for the Secretariat and its affiliated entities continued to increase during the period 2012-2014, rising from 529 exceptions authorized in 2010-2012 to 747 in 2012-2014 and reflecting an increase of 41.2 per cent, with a corresponding increase in additional travel costs from $1,268,934 to $2,301,488, or 81.4 per cent. Further analysis shows the following:

(a) The total number of exceptions authorized by the Secretary-General for first-class travel decreased by 36.5 per cent, from 137 in the period 2010-2012 to 87 in the period 2012-2014, while the overall additional cost decreased to a lesser extent, from $616,782 to $607,998, reflecting a reduction of 1.4 per cent. The Advisory Committee was informed that the definition of "eminent persons" had changed in 2013, limiting the category to current and former Heads of State and Government, resulting in the transfer of some requests from the category of eminent persons (eligible for first-class travel) to the category of prominent persons;

(b) For business class travel, however, the total number of exceptions for the Secretariat and its affiliated agencies rose from 392 exceptions authorized in the period 2010-2012 to 660 in the period 2012-2014, reflecting an increase of 68.4 per cent, while the additional travel costs increased from approximately $652,000 to $1.7 million, respectively;

(c) A large number of the exceptions authorized for business-class travel related to prominent travellers, whose share had increased disproportionately from 153, or 39 per cent of the total number of 392 exceptions authorized during the period 2010-2012 to 459 in the period 2012-2014, representing 70 per cent of the total number of 660 exceptions authorized during the period 2012-2014. For the Secretariat the number of exceptions for prominent travellers increased from 87, out of a total of 228 exceptions (38.2 per cent) in the period 2010-2012, to 234, out of a total of 392 exceptions (59.7 per cent) authorized in period 2012-2014 (see para. 9 (a) above);

(d) The number of exceptions authorized for other reasons did not evolve significantly, apart from the number of exceptions granted for the travel of security detail officers, which increased from 9 in the period 2010-2012 to 25 in the period 2012-2014.

10. The Advisory Committee requested further information on the overall number of trips and related costs, in order to gain a better understanding of overall travel activity and the significance of the number and additional costs of exceptions in the overall picture, as well as on the impact of the changes made in August 2013 to the standards of accommodation for air travel. The Committee was informed that such information was not available; however, it was provided with limited information on the costs of tickets as recorded in the eight Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) databases and on travel arranged and ticketed through the Headquarters travel agency. While the data provided is indicative only, reflecting a partial view of travel expenditures, it is included, for information purposes, in the annex to the present report.

11. **The Advisory Committee notes that the requests contained in General Assembly resolution 67/254 A regarding the limitation of the use of exceptions and the presentation of proposals for enhancing controls in this area have not been fulfilled. The Committee recommends that the Assembly request the Secretary-General to intensify his efforts to proactively limit the number of exceptions and to strengthen internal controls in this regard, and to report on progress achieved in his next report.**

12. In paragraph 14 of his report, the Secretary-General indicates that the average additional cost per trip for the Secretariat increased to $2,666, compared with $1,641 during the period 2010-2012, the increase being attributable to two cases of emergency medical repatriations of staff members and to the global trend of increasing airfares. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that if the two cases of medical repatriations were to be excluded, the average additional cost per trip during the period 2012-2014 would amount to $2,276, compared with $1,641 during the period 2010-2012. **The Advisory Committee is of the view that future reports should provide simple averages and statistical averages without outliers for such data, in order to facilitate more meaningful comparisons over time.**

B. Prominent traveller category

13. In paragraph 13 of his report, the Secretary-General indicates that the promulgation of administrative instruction ST/AI/2013/3, which made economy class the standard accommodation for air travel for non-staff personnel providing services to the Organization, resulted in more requests for exceptions in the period 2012-2014, especially for the category of prominent travellers — in some cases, travellers in this category were previously eligible for the same standards of accommodation as staff members. He further indicates that large numbers of prominent persons provided their services to the Organization without remuneration, including by participating in substantive meetings; by participating as members of technical and advisory committees; and by providing input at high-level panels.

14. In this connection, the Advisory Committee recalls that in his report on proposals for a more effective and efficient utilization of resources for air travel (A/66/676), the Secretary-General proposed that all travellers, other than staff members and members of committees and panels, but including consultants and individual contractors, be required to travel in economy class. In its related report, the Advisory Committee included information provided to it upon request regarding the types of travellers that would be included under the scope of the category "all other travellers"[1] (A/66/739, paras. 17-20). Furthermore, while it did not object to the proposed measure, the Committee had pointed out in its report that the Secretary-General had not offered any justification for the other listed categories of travellers being subject to a different standard of accommodation from staff members and members of committees and panels, and had also expressed its view that if the Secretary-General had wished in the future to apply the proposal beyond the

[1] The list included the following: applicant, household member, consultant, trainee, intern, meeting participant, subcontractor, volunteer, Government representative, representative of least developed countries, military observer, police monitor, medical personnel, Government civilian personnel, Government military personnel, international contract personnel, expert (excluding high-level expert) and adviser.

categories of consultants and individual contractors, clear analysis for each category of personnel listed above would need to be provided to the General Assembly.

15. The Advisory Committee was provided with the table below, which indicates the evolution of the number of exceptions by category since the period 1996-1998. The table clearly shows that the growth in the number of exceptions reflects the increased volume of travel in the prominent traveller category.

Number of exceptions to the standards of accommodation for air travel by category

Category	*1996-1998*	*1998-2000*	*2000-2002*	*2002-2004*	*2004-2006*	*2006-2008*	*2008-2010*	*2010-2012*	*2012-2014*
Medical condition	12	23	36	53	62	45	98	136	113
Regular standard not available	19	29	21	43	16	14	21	56	28
Eminent traveller	23	31	43	60	16	35	57	72	30
Prominent traveller	19	14	16	48	22	27	58	153	459
Arduous journey	3	11	8	8	0	1	4	3	20
Security	24	28	24	26	35	56	73	94	93

16. Upon request, the Advisory Committee was informed that of the 147 additional exceptions authorized under the prominent traveller category in the period 2012-2014, as compared with the period 2010-2012, 123 (84 per cent) were related to requests from the following six entities: 21 from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs; 31 from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; 41 from the Economic Commission for Africa; 17 from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; 6 from the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific; and 7 from the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. The Committee was further informed that the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the regional commissions relied on the convening capabilities of the United Nations to provide a forum for policy discussions to inform intergovernmental processes and facilitate negotiations and agreements among Member States, and to promote the implementation of policies and/or the creation of legal instruments, norms and standards in various areas of development. The prominent persons who participated in those meetings were high-level current or former government officials, distinguished academics and professors, or other individuals who made substantive contributions to those meetings at no cost to the Organization and contributed in a significant manner to their successful outcome. In addition, the prominent persons were often required to travel from distant places, and the requirement to travel in economy class would reduce their willingness to travel and participate in the meetings.

17. Upon enquiry the Advisory Committee was also informed that during the period 2012-2014 the Secretariat had declined authorization of 72 formal requests for exceptions submitted to the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management. Furthermore, the executive officers of the requesting departments/offices also reviewed certain cases and could decide, at the departmental level, not to submit formal requests for authorization of exceptions: the total number of requests that had been declined could therefore not be provided since consolidated records for such requests were not maintained centrally.

18. Taking into account the definition of prominent person contained in paragraph 12 (d) of the report of the Secretary-General, the Advisory Committee

requested further explanations of the reasons for categorizing as prominent travellers the holders of functions such as Personal Assistant, Legal Adviser, Counsellor and spokesperson, as shown in the various annexes to the report. The Committee was informed that the exceptions were authorized on the basis of the specific functions held by the individuals in question: for instance, an exception was authorized for an individual travelling to represent the chair of a commission on the basis of the travel entitlement for the chair of that commission. **The Advisory Committee is of the view that such an approach could result in the granting of incorrect standards of accommodation for air travel.**

19. **In view of the foregoing, the Advisory Committee is of the opinion that the criteria for determining prominent traveller status should be clarified and that definitions should be tightened and consistently applied in order to allow for a more streamlined, systematic and efficient process for responding to requests for exceptions to the standards of accommodation for air travel. The Committee therefore recommends that the General Assembly consider establishing a clear definition and a common set of criteria for determining the prominent traveller status of individuals and that it request the Secretary-General to submit proposals in this regard for its consideration.**

C. Lump-sum option

20. In its resolution 67/254 A, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to include in his report on the standards of accommodation for air travel to be submitted to the Assembly at its sixty-ninth session, an analysis of the impact of the implementation of its decision to reduce the provision for determining the travel-related lump-sum payment from 75 per cent to 70 per cent of the least restrictive economy class airfare and to make further proposals on modifying the lump-sum scheme. The information requested is provided in paragraphs 29 and 30 of annex XXII to the report of the Secretary-General (A/69/643).

21. In paragraph 22 of annex XXII of his report (A/69/643 and Corr.1), the Secretary-General states that reliable and complete data on the utilization rate of the lump sum and the savings directly attributable to the changes to the lump-sum payment option are currently not readily available. However, he indicates that selected data on the top eight lump-sum destinations from Headquarters shows that the 5 percentage point decrease in the entitlement has resulted in a minimum savings of 6.7 per cent in lump-sum payments. Furthermore, acceptance of the lump-sum payment option rate remains at approximately 93 per cent, and no significant drop has been observed in the selection of the lump-sum travel entitlement compared with the provision of tickets and related benefits by the Organization.

22. The Secretary-General also indicates that because the change to the lump-sum option was introduced just over a year ago, approximately half of the eligible staff members in duty stations with a 24-month home leave cycle have so far had the opportunity of using their home leave entitlement. Therefore, more experience is necessary and additional time is required to examine the matter before proposals for further change can be considered. He recommends maintaining the lump-sum provision at 70 per cent of the least restrictive economy class fare until at least the first part of the resumed seventieth session of the General Assembly, when a proposal based on the additional experience gained and an analysis thereof will be

submitted. **The Advisory Committee has no objection to the proposal of the Secretary-General.**

23. In addition, the Secretary-General indicates that the lump-sum option reduces the administrative workload associated with issuing tickets and processing travel claims relating to entitlement travel, thereby saving on staff costs. **The Advisory Committee is of the view that wider use by staff of the lump-sum option should be encouraged.**

24. According to the Secretary-General, in order to enable the Organization to continue to benefit from the lump-sum option, the amount needs to remain attractive enough for the vast majority of staff to opt for it in lieu of the issuance of air tickets, while at the same time remaining cost-effective for the Organization. **The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to conduct further analysis, with a view to finding the right balance between the efficiencies to be gained through a further decrease in the lump-sum payment and the higher costs resulting from a decrease of staff willing to use the lump-sum payment option, including administrative costs for issuing tickets, and to report on the outcome of his analysis in his next report. The study should also factor in and provide an estimate of the reduced administrative workload related to the use of the lump-sum payment option.**

D. Overall air travel activity and expenditure

25. In its resolution 65/268, the General Assembly noted with concern the lack of consolidated and comprehensive data on air travel across the United Nations system. In resolution 67/254 A, the Assembly stressed the importance of the provision of accurate, complete and comprehensible data as the basis for sound management and effective oversight of all costs relating to air travel. In its resolution 65/268, the Assembly requested that such information be provided in the context of the programme budget, including details by budget section and payments under the lump-sum scheme. In resolution 67/254, the Assembly reiterated its request, noting that the Secretary-General had not provided the information requested. However, the Secretariat has indicated that it is not in a position to provide the requested information, owing to the weaknesses and fragmentation of its information systems.

26. In its resolution 65/268, the General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to make a proposal for a mechanism to allow for the effective tracking of all costs associated with commercial air travel in the Secretariat. In response, the Secretary-General indicated, in paragraph 67 of his report on proposals for a more effective and efficient utilization of resources for air travel (A/66/676), that requirements for the effective tracking of all costs associated with commercial air travel have been fully incorporated in the design of the travel module of Umoja and, furthermore, that it is expected that Umoja implementation at Headquarters, offices away from Headquarters, regional commissions, peacekeeping missions and special political missions would enable adequate tracking and classification of all air travel charges.

27. In its report (A/67/695), the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) notes that travel represented one of the most significant categories of expenditure for the Organization, but that historically, it has been difficult to obtain consolidated

and comprehensive data on air travel expenditures across the United Nations, owing to limitations in information systems. In cooperation with the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts, OIOS estimated that travel expenditures (comprising costs of air tickets, lump-sum amounts, subsistence allowances, terminal expenses and shipments) for United Nations Headquarters, offices away from Headquarters and regional commissions for the biennium 2010-2011 were approximately $535 million; travel expenditures for special political missions for the biennium 2010-2011 amounted to $40 million; and for peacekeeping missions, the expenditures amounted to $91 million and $103 million for the financial years ended 30 June 2010 and 30 June 2011, respectively. The total travel expenditures for the United Nations over a two-year period were therefore estimated at some $769 million.

28. The Advisory Committee requested further details on the information used to prepare budget estimates for travel-related resources. It was informed that cost estimates for budgetary purposes were provided by the travel units and travel agencies at various duty stations. Furthermore, the figures used for budgeting purposes were based on generic travel dates and itineraries and differed from actual ticket cost. The Secretariat considered it prudent to ensure that budgeting figures did not fall below actual ticket costs as this would result in budget shortfalls that could endanger programme delivery. Consequently, figures provided for budgeting purposes did not take into account tickets with significant restrictions, limited availability or seasonal fluctuation. **The Advisory Committee is concerned that the approach taken is likely to result in overbudgeting. Furthermore, given the absence of reliable information on travel expenditures, it is not clear how travel expenditures are monitored and managed, oversight exercised, accountability of managers ensured, or assurance given as to the effectiveness of internal controls (see para. 35 below).**

29. **The Advisory Committee reiterates that resources for official travel should be utilized judiciously in the interest of the Organization and that before official travel is authorized as a means to implement mandated activities, full account of its cost-effectiveness and the impact on productivity resulting from prolonged absences from the office while travelling should be taken into account to determine whether other means of representation and methods of communication can be utilized instead. The Committee also emphasizes that the primary consideration in authorizing official travel should be whether direct face-to-face contact is necessary for mandate implementation. If not, then alternative methods should be employed (A/66/739).**

E. Scope and content

30. The Advisory Committee considers it important to provide the General Assembly with detailed information on the exceptions authorized by the Secretary-General pursuant to the discretionary authority vested in him. It is of the view, however, that such information must be accompanied by data on the overall travel activity and related costs both at the organizational and departmental levels in order to provide the Assembly with a full picture of the situation and allow for meaningful analysis of trends.

31. The Advisory Committee also considers that the General Assembly should be provided with information and analysis on the financial impact of the numerous measures that have been adopted to improve the management of air travel pursuant to Assembly resolution 65/268, in order to allow the Assembly to better assess the improvements achieved and make adjustments, as necessary. In addition, as indicated in paragraphs 23 to 26 above, the Assembly has on multiple occasions requested that it be provided with information that is more comprehensive and of better quality in respect of overall travel expenditures, in order to support oversight and decision-making on the allocation of resources for official travel (see Assembly resolutions 65/268, section IV, para. 13, and 67/254 A, section VI, para. 6).

32. The Secretary-General indicated in paragraph 67 of his report on proposals for a more effective and efficient utilization of resources for air travel (A/66/676) that, following implementation of the travel module of Umoja, whose full deployment across the Secretariat, including field missions, is planned by the end of 2015, detailed information on travel activity and costs will become available and be easily accessible. **The Advisory Committee trusts that such information will include, inter alia, comprehensive information on the volume, frequency, purpose and class of air travel (first/business/economy), the number of trips undertaken by department/office/mission, actual and planned costs, compliance with approved travel rules, such as advance purchase and authorized class of air travel, as well as information on individual travel requests, travel plans and travel expenses, such as date of booking, travel dates, itinerary and number of travel days, category of personnel, and the nature of the business being conducted.**

33. **The Advisory Committee considers that the narrow focus of the report of the Secretary-General on standards of accommodation for air travel, which is devoted almost exclusively to the presentation of exceptions to the standards of accommodation for air travel, no longer meets the requirements of the General Assembly. While noting the limitations of current information systems, the Committee is disappointed that greater effort was not made to respond, even partially and with the data available, to the repeated requests of the Assembly for reliable information on overall travel expenditures in order to facilitate its consideration of the programme budget, taking into consideration the delays in the implementation of Umoja.**

34. **In the light of the upcoming implementation of the travel module of Umoja, which will make detailed information available, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to broaden the scope and enhance the content of the report of the Secretary-General to include, in addition to the information currently provided on exceptions authorized by the Secretary-General, comprehensive information on air travel activity across the entire Secretariat, including offices away from Headquarters and peacekeeping operations, as well as air travel-related costs under all sources of funding. In preparing his report, the Secretary-General should take into account the provisions and requests contained in Assembly resolutions 65/268 and 67/254 A, the observations and recommendations emanating from the audits of oversight bodies and all other relevant factors.**

F. Oversight and internal controls

35. The Advisory Committee is of the opinion that it is important to ensure that effective internal controls are in place, that air travel rules are being properly applied and that travel resources are being utilized in the most economical manner possible. This includes, for instance, ensuring that due consideration has been given to alternative means of representation and methods of communication before travel is authorized, that tickets are purchased in advance whenever possible and that staff participating in training-related activities travel only economy class, irrespective of the duration of the travel. The Committee considers that there is a need to conduct a performance audit of travel activity across the Secretariat in order to address the matter. **To this end, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to entrust the Office of Internal Oversight Services of the Secretariat to conduct a performance audit of all air travel activities across the Secretariat, including offices away from Headquarters and peacekeeping operations, on the proper application of air travel rules and economical utilization of travel resources under all sources of funding.**

Audit of travel in peacekeeping operations by the Board of Auditors

36. As indicated in paragraph 2 above, the report of the Board of Auditors on peacekeeping operations for the period ended 30 June 2014 provides information on the outcome of its audit of official travel for peacekeeping operations, conducted in response to a request of the Advisory Committee (A/69/5 (Vol. II), paras. 55-82). The key findings of the Board include the following:

(a) An increase in the expenditure on official travel, from $46.42 million in 2011/12 to $65.55 million in 2013/14, reflecting overexpenditure of 25 per cent;

(b) Weak compliance with the advance purchase policy;

(c) Insufficient monitoring and recovery of travel advances to staff members;

(d) Avoidable expenditure in ticketing arrangements.

The Advisory Committee will revert to this issue in the context of its consideration of the proposals of the Secretary-General for the budgets of peacekeeping missions for the period 2015/16.

Implementation of the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

37. In its resolution 65/268, the General Assembly requested that the Secretary-General entrust the Office of Internal Oversight Services of the Secretariat to conduct a comprehensive audit of all air travel activities and related practices.

38. In its report on the comprehensive audit of air travel activities and related practices (A/67/695), OIOS indicates that the comprehensive audit of air travel activities and related practices covered air travel operations at Headquarters, the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Office at Vienna, the United Nations Office at Nairobi, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq. The audit included: (a) assessing the status of the implementation of provisions

in resolution 65/268 for the efficient and effective utilization of air travel resources; (b) determining the adequacy and effectiveness of processes for procuring air travel management services and delegating the authority for granting exceptions to standards of accommodation for air travel; (c) identifying all expenditures on air travel and lump-sum payments to eligible staff members; and (d) carrying out a cost-benefit analysis of the lump-sum options. OIOS issued a total of 22 recommendations for strengthening internal controls, all of which were accepted by the Secretariat.

39. Annex XXII to the report of the Secretary-General (A/69/643 and Corr.1) provides information on the implementation status of the recommendations contained in the report of OIOS on the comprehensive audit of air travel activities and related practices (A/67/695) and the lump-sum option. In his report, the Secretary-General indicates that the Department of Management has implemented the recommendations contained in the OIOS report to the extent possible. The Advisory Committee notes that, in a number of cases, it is indicated that full implementation and/or automation is dependent on the implementation of Umoja. **The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to provide a detailed update on the implementation status of the OIOS recommendations in his next report, following the deployment of Umoja.**

G. Other matters

United Nations standards of accommodation for air travel

40. The Advisory Committee observes that, in recent years, many airlines have significantly cut back, if not entirely eliminated, first-class sections on aircraft and have introduced several varieties of enhanced business-class and economy-class travel. In addition, the differences in the level of accommodation between first class and business class have been minimized in certain cases, and there are also a growing number of options offered for premium economy-class travel. In the light of the rapid pace of change in the air travel industry, which is driven by the fast-growing volume of air travel and continuous improvements in technology, and also taking into account the highly competitive nature of passenger air travel markets, the Committee is of the view that it is important to keep under constant review the developments in the travel industry and in classes of travel. **The Advisory Committee therefore recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to conduct a review of developments in the air travel industry over time. On this basis, the Secretary-General should then provide an assessment of the United Nations standards of accommodation regarding class of air travel and, if warranted, make proposals in this regard.**

Frequent flyer miles

41. The Advisory Committee recalls that a comprehensive review by the Secretary-General of the potential application of frequent flyer miles for official travel within the United Nations concluded that the United Nations could not achieve any savings through a formal programme that manages frequent flyer miles for official travel (A/66/676, para. 64). **While noting the conclusion of the Secretary-General, the Committee nonetheless encourages the Secretary-General to continue to monitor industry best practices and the experiences of national Governments in that area.**

42. Upon enquiry as to whether frequent flyer miles accumulated by staff on official travel had been applied to purchase tickets for official travel or to upgrade a ticket purchased at a class below the entitled level of accommodation, the Advisory Committee was informed that such data was currently not available because there was no managed frequent flyer programme in place. However, pursuant to the endorsement by the General Assembly, in paragraph 2, section VI, of its resolution 67/254 A, the conclusions and recommendation contained in the report of the Advisory Committee (A/66/739), the Office of Human Resources Management was in the process of updating an information circular on travel. In accordance with paragraph 11 of the report of the Committee (A/66/739), staff members are instructed not to use any frequent flyer miles gained as a result of conducting official business on behalf of the Organization for personal travel and are encouraged to use such frequent flyer miles for official travel, where feasible. The Organization relies on the integrity of staff in the usage of miles earned through official business. **The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to include in his next report details on the use of frequent flyer miles to purchase or upgrade tickets for official travel.**

Annex

Data on travel expenditures

Table 1

Travel expenditures for Headquarters and offices away from Headquarters[a] for the period from 1 January 2012 to 31 January 2013

(United States dollars)

Regular budget	*Ticket cost*	*Non-ticket cost*	*Total travel cost*
Regular budget	108 710 440	73 760 673	182 471 113
Peacekeeping[b]	34 285 098	8 352 782	42 637 880
Total	**142 995 538**	**82 113 455**	**225 108 993**

[a] United Nations Office at Geneva, United Nations Office at Vienna, United Nations Office at Nairobi, Economic Commission for Africa, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia.

[b] Includes data from 1 January 2012 to 31 December 2013 (2013/14).

Table 2

Travel costs related to travel requests processed in one of the eight Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) databases, including regular budget and extrabudgetary sources, and costs of travel of staff as well as travel of representatives[a]

(United States dollars)

Duty station	*1 July 2010-30 June 2012*	*1 July 2012-30 June 2014*
Economic Commission for Africa	13 522 950.34	13 791 992.08
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	9 756 401.24	8 332 671.45
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	11 664 377.90	12 005 866.48
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia	2 399 911.19	2 935 022.05
United Nations Headquarters	135 427 421.24	114 028 811.90
United Nations Office at Geneva	90 911 934.52	74 706 175.27
United Nations Office at Vienna	15 005 422.87	15 372 706.63
United Nations Office at Nairobi	53 946 282.06	54 674 896.16
Total	**332 634 701.36**	**295 848 142.02**

[a] Including both ticket and non-ticket costs. Non-ticket costs include daily subsistence allowance, terminal expenses and other costs, such as excess baggage, conference fees, visa application fees, telephone/Internet charges and airport taxes.

Table 3
United Nations Headquarters travel for 2014 and 2013, on the basis of travel arranged and ticketed through the Headquarters travel agency

Statistics	*2014*	*2013*	*Variance (percentage)*
Tickets			
Total cost	$43 300 000	$45 700 000	(5.3)
Number purchased	16 426	15 809	3.9
Average price	$2 636	$2 893	(8.9)
Miles			
Miles flown	114 400 000	109 000 000	4.9
Average cost per mile	$0.38	$0.42	(9.7)